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College Students Clean Up

Orientation for ESF students includes community service

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By Meghan Rubado
Staff writer

Hip-deep in water, Danielle Fish tugged on a large piece of metal sticking up from Onondaga Creek on Saturday.

"What do we have here?" she wondered out loud.

As she pulled the metal out of the water and up to her chest, it showed the shape of a giant number 4.

Fish, of Long Island, teamed up with about 40 other first-year students at the State University College of Environmental Science and Forestry to clean up the area around where Plum Street crosses the creek.

The service project was part of an orientation program that introduces new students to the campus and the Central New York community.

Groups of 25 to 50 students went to seven sites - Onondaga Creekwalk, Upper Onondaga Park, Elmwood Park, Thornden Park, Westminster Park, Carpenters Brook hatchery and Onondaga Lake Park, according to Leah Flynn, coordinator of student programs for the college. "These guys are first-year students," Flynn said. "We want them to know right away that service is part of our culture."

The community service aspect was added to the orientation program this year. It helps students get to know each other and the Syracuse area, Flynn said.

Student orientation leaders took charge of the service teams. Nicole Formoso, a junior, led the creekwalk project.

"This is a great way to get them accustomed to campus life and to Syracuse," Formoso said. "They see that they're not confined to our campus."

On the bus ride to the work site, orientation leaders pointed out attractions like Clinton and Armory squares, Formoso said.

Formoso said about 90 percent of the freshmen attended the service

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projects, which were not mandatory. "It's expected or suggested, but not mandatory that they go," she said. "We're really happy with how this is turning out."

Melissa Fadden, a freshman from Binghamton, said she never thought about skipping out on the project.

"This is fun," she said, wiping the mud off her arms. "I wanted to come. I love to romp around outside."

Fadden even found a treasure to bring back to her new dorm room. She pulled a Van Morrison "Blowin' Your Mind!" record out of the creek.


The creekwalk crew worked from about 10:30 a.m. until 2 p.m. Among the items they removed from the creek were tires, chairs, clothing, a paintball gun, a butter knife and a bottle of red nail polish.

Fish said the polish was in pretty good condition, considering where they found it.

"The boys will probably be putting it on their nails on the bus ride home," Fish said.

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